

Chapter 11

And the angel answered him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news." —Luke 1:19

Jesus stood in Theater One and facing the many children he loved seated before him. The theatergoers never tired of seeing their Lord's face glowing with steadfast love and faithfulness.

"It is time for Gabriel to appear in Africa," Jesus proclaimed.

Cheers erupted, and the Harley biker stood with excitement, some of his popcorn flying into the air and landing on the floor. No worries. A few red squirrels scampered between the rows enjoying the Heavenly Pop with the crowd of humans. The Harley biker patted the two squirrels below his seat as they munched away on popcorn that had flown their way.

"Hey, Mike and Ike! Good to see ya!" Nothing is wasted in Heaven, and all of God's creation lives in harmony.

On the big screen, everyone watched the scene in the Jaro village unfold.

The local witch doctor addressed Keeja while Jay listened. "I think it may be best if your niece stays here in the village of her birth."

Keeja dreaded this thought, knowing that Penda would be an impoverished servant or worse in this village. In many places, large sums of money exchanged hands with promises to give children education and work in the city. Tragically, many of those dreams crashed to nightmares as children become trapped in a dark world of hard labor or prostitution.

Keeja knew of these risks, and he quickly prayed. "God, please help!"

"This child is one of ours," the witch doctor continued, his eyes darkening. "Come over here, little one," he ordered.

Penda looked from the witch doctor to Keeja, not sure what to do.

In that moment of Penda's indecision, the Angel Gabriel silently glided into the Jaro village, coming to rest on his feet right behind Keeja. Gabe's face shown with holy light, and he stared down Satan, who stood directly behind the witch doctor.

In Theater One, the audience could tell the spiritual battle was invisible to the humans in East Africa.

“Before time began, God chose little Penda to follow in the ways of Jesus. Back away, Satan!” Gabriel commanded. Gabe’s white wings had stayed fully extended, and they glowed with power from on high.

“I want her as one of mine,” Satan responded, nervous and a bit surprised to see Gabriel showing up. “Why is she so important?”

Gabriel responded with the authority of Heaven. “You will not hinder this child. God has determined that this girl will be a great teacher of the Bible among the Jaro women.”

Like God’s promises to Jeremiah, Jesus had declared to Gabriel some of the plans for Penda’s welfare—not for evil, and to give her a hope and a future.

“Well done, Gabriel,” Jesus smiled. “I am pleased to act in response to the prayers of my daughter, Christina.”

Returning home from Shirley’s Snips, her freshly coiffed hair crackled with hairspray, Gremma felt the joy of the Spirit as she settled into her rocking chair and continued in prayer. “Dear God, I come to the door and knock again requesting that you bless Jay, Keeja, Penda, and the Jaro people. I know that you are not bothered to hear from me again, and I know that Jay needs you on this hard day. Please bring glory to your Name and strength to your people. You are the Light of the World.”

In the Jaro village, Keeja’s confidence grew with a surge of spiritual strength as he replied to the witch doctor, “Penda is my niece. I will care for her well.”

Satan broke contact with Gabriel’s piercing gaze and retreated—an icy rush of cream-colored wings furling into flight. Satan knew his limitations. There were still many other places where his ways could prevail.

“I see.” The witch doctor paused. “The child may go,” he announced, not sure why he changed his mind, but he saw the determination in Keeja’s eyes.

Keeja’s stomach relaxed a bit, and he quickly helped Penda perch safely onto his silver-colored bike rack. Keeja got onto his bike and began to pedal away. Jay followed on his own bicycle, both eager to leave before anyone challenged them further.

Penda kept her arms wrapped tightly around Keeja’s waist as he spoke foundational truths she would recall many times later in her life.

“Penda, you may not understand at all what I’m about to say to you, but I pray that God will bring back my words to you at times when you are ready for them. I love you, and I am honored to be your uncle. More importantly, our God who made the heavens and the earth loves you more than I do. His love is steadfast, and he will never die. I am sad today because of the death of your mama, my sister, but I am walking through this day knowing that God loves me and you, and he has good plans for us.”

Penda took in the words. But she responded with a blank stare and silence as she held onto her Uncle Keeja, now her parent.

“Thank you, God!” exhaled Jay. “I didn’t know if Penda would be coming with us, and I am so glad that you, God, answered our prayers this way.”

Back in Heaven’s Theater One, excitement and praise to God echoed among the seats.

“All right!” shouted the Harley biker of Heaven who jumped around, slapping the backs of his neighbors.

A victory had been won, but the theatergoers knew that this Jaro region was in Satan’s territory, and he was not about to give it up easily.